



Woolwich Polytechnic  
**School for Girls**



# WOOLWICH POLYTECHNIC SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

## Student Attendance Policy

Reviewed September 2023  
Approved: December 2023  
Revision due: December 2024

Woolwich Polytechnic School for Girls is committed to promoting the welfare of each child through regular attendance. Every day lost to education can have a serious impact on a child's attainment and overall progress in school. The aim of this policy, therefore, is to encourage the highest possible levels of attendance for individual student within the school. Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement and it is also essential in order to maximise chances of success. There is clear evidence showing strong links between excellent GCSE results and excellent attendance.

To achieve this, all members of our school community have an important contribution to make.

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this School Attendance Policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education.

### **Rationale**

Woolwich Polytechnic School for Girls is committed to promoting the welfare of each child through regular School attendance. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children.

We are therefore fully committed to promoting School attendance by providing an environment and ethos where children feel safe and can build positive relationships with their peers and School staff. In return, we expect parents to ensure that their child attends School regularly and punctually and that no holidays are taken in term time.

### **Why Attendance is so important**

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress; personally, socially and academically
- Regular attenders find routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary, secondary, and higher education, employment or training

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at School is the parents' legal responsibility. Permitting absence from School without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. Persistent punctuality issues will be dealt with according to this Attendance Policy.

### **Safeguarding**

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend School regularly. The School will provide support and advice as appropriate with any attendance concerns as they arise and beyond. Failure to attend School on a regular basis will be regarded as a safeguarding matter and could lead to a referral to Children's Services being made and the Inclusion Office being alerted.

### **Promoting Good Attendance**

We aim to take a proactive, positive role to promoting good attendance. A system of rewards and personal monitoring has been established and may include the measures outlined below:

- Certificates/prizes presented in assembly to the Form Group with the highest attendance.
- Additional rewards for individuals with excellent attendance and punctuality.
- Letters sent home to celebrate improved attendance.

### **Authorised Absence**

Absence may be authorised in the following circumstances:

- Illness
- Medical or dental appointment (although these should be avoided in school time if possible)
- A day set aside for religious observance
- Approved work experience organised by the school (recorded as a 'present' mark)
- Absence following the death of a close family member

Only the School can decide whether to accept the reason provided by the parent for absence and therefore whether to authorise it.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

This is deemed to be absence from School for any period as a result of premeditated or spontaneous act by the students or parent or both. This includes parentally condoned absence. Any absence not listed above will be treated as unauthorised. Particularly, but not limited to:

- The student's mother, father, sibling or guardian being ill (except in exceptional circumstances)
- Family work patterns (shift work or occasional holidays) or the responsibility of looking after a sibling
- Indulging a child who wants to stay at home or inability to control a child
- A student's birthday
- Non-medical appointments
- Child in paid work before the age of 16
- Parents' hostility towards School

### **Holidays in Term Time**

Holidays should not be taken in School time as this disrupts the learning of a child. Term time holidays will be marked as unauthorised.

### **Registration**

The register is a legal document and it is the responsibility of the Teacher to ensure that students are registered for the morning and afternoon session (registration). All students must be registered in every lesson using the School system. Students must not mark the register themselves.

### **Lateness**

- Punctuality is important; parents/carers of any student who is late can expect to be contacted by the School and the student will be required to attend a 60 minute reset (detention) after school.
- Students will be marked late if not in their tutor group before 8.30am.
- Parents will be contacted by letter or email at the end of a week where a student has been repeatedly late to School or lessons, parents can also view their child's attendance to lessons via MCAS app. A Child's absence to school can be monitored through studybugs, alerts will also be sent via the app.
- Resets will be set to address punctuality issues.
- Continued concerns with punctuality with require a meeting between parents and the Pastoral Team.

## Absence Procedures

### Students

- Students should arrive on site by 8.25am in time for registration at 8.30am.
- Students arriving late must go to reception to be registered by the receptionist before going to their registration time or timetabled lesson.
- For any student not registered in the School after close of morning registration an absence notification will be issued to parents/carers via study bugs.

### Parents

**Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act requires parents of children of compulsory age to ensure their children's' full-time education. Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their children attend regularly and on time.**

Parents should:

- Contact the school every day via study bugs for a child's absence.
- Contact the school if your child is struggling to come to school on a regular basis for support.
- On student's return to School, provide evidence of the reason for absence (if the Tutor or Head of Year are not satisfied with the explanation offered, parents can be asked to provide medical evidence to support the reasons given).
- Make every effort to ensure that medical and dental appointments are made out of School hours or during holidays. If this is unavoidable, the School should be informed in advance.
- Holiday requests will never be authorised retrospectively.

**Please Note:** If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you any of the named parent/carers after three days of absence the school is required to start a 'Child Missing Education (CME)' procedures as set down by Borough. (Also see Appendix 1)

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any students who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing'. Children's Services Staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. So, help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date contact number.

Any child who is absent from school for more than 20 days without reason, has taken an unauthorised holiday for more than 20 days, has left school without completing a Leavers Form and has failed to supply the school with copies of travel documents, will be reported as a Child Missing Education. The borough will be notified of this and they will investigate further. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents and the child including making enquires to known friends, wider family.

### Monitoring Attendance and Support

- Regular monitoring of attendance ensures that any unexplained sudden absence or suspect patterns of regular absence are reported to the Head of Year concerned.
- Email and electronic communication via app may be used to inform parents of lateness and absence.
- Regular meetings with Head of Year and Attendance Officer will be held.
- If the pattern of absences cause concern, the School will consider Early Help Intervention which could include a referral to the FaASS, holding a TAC meeting, involving the young person's nurse service or other appropriate external organisations. This may include home visits .

- Students who have attendance and/or punctuality that is a cause for concern will be placed on an Individualised Attendance Plan (IAP) to support improved attendance and/or punctuality. The IAP will outline support for the student and/or family as well as actions taken by the attendance service (including but not limited to letters, court warnings, pre-court conferences, court referrals and fixed penalty notices).
- IAP support will be unique to the student and family, based on the needs identified in the meetings mentioned above. However they could include: referrals to outside agencies such as the Family and Adolescent Support Service (FaASS), referrals to in school support such as mentoring, counselling or Restart, involvement of the youth nurse service (Oxleas), revised timetable and consideration of support from the Mental Health in Schools Team if appropriate.

**Attendance data is used to:**

- Improve School and student performance (benchmarking against other year groups in school as well as the National and local context)
- Monitor progress towards School attendance targets.
- Identify patterns and causes of absence.
- Monitor post-registration and internal truancy.
- Promote the importance of good attendance to students and their parents/carers.
- Intervene early when individual absence gives cause for concern.
- Develop support systems for vulnerable students.
- Reward and celebrate good and improved attendance - through praise and the reward system.

**Penalty Notices for Non-Attendance and other Legal Measures:**

In Education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

**Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness**

Woolwich Polytechnic School and Greenwich Attendance Advisory will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will be considered through a referral a referral to Greenwich Attendance Legal Panel where:

1. **The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance.**
2. **The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.**

The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty Notices
- Educations Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

**Legal Measures for absence taken when the Head Teacher has declined parent/carers request for leave of absence**

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

1. Non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence or
2. A holiday that has been taken without permission

*and the unauthorised absence is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible sessions then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued*

Where a child has **unauthorised absence**, the School must enforce Greenwich Attendance Advisory Service Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance.

**The code of conduct states that:**

Schools will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible sessions - these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of the register, but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness, and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance

unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

**If a child's has unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance, then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:**

- 1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10-week period**
- 2. 1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal assessment of testing where dates are published in advance.**

Parents and Carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the attendance policy and website. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence, the school or Greenwich Attendance Advisory Service will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to one or more parent/carers for each child. N.B This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one PN for each child to each parent

Each penalty notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the penalty notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days, the Penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid Greenwich Attendance Advisory Service will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Greenwich Council and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay. For further information parents/carers can visit Royal Borough of Greenwich website at: <http://royalboroughofgreenwich.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

The Government has given local education authorities and other designated bodies (including Head Teachers) the power to issue fixed penalty notices where parents or carers are considered capable of, but unwilling, to ensure their child attends

regularly. The Anti-Social Behaviour Act introduced these additional powers in February 2004 in common with a number of other Greenwich schools.

#### **Staff involved in attendance**

- The member of the Senior Leadership Team with the responsibility for attendance and punctuality is Ms E Smith.
- The Attendance Officer for the school is Sandy Jones
- All Heads and Deputy Heads of Year will also be directly involved in the monitoring of attendance and taking action with poor attendance.
- The school office and administrative staff will be involved in the logging and administration of attendance including the production of letters regarding attendance and punctuality.
- We also work with the Attendance Advisory Service at the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

# APPENDIX 1

